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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses dilemmas in doing research on the kinds of teachers who are effective with Eskimo and Indian children in isolated, rural Alaska communities. Issues discussed are identification of effective cross-cultural teachers by a "multiple hurdle" technique; criteria that 228 teachers, 29 administrators, and 40 community members used to identify effective cross-cultural teachers; and whether effective village teachers can be described in statements that are general enough to be valid and specific enough to be useful. The multiple hurdle technique for identifying effective cross-cultural teachers by using consistent nominations by teaching colleagues, school administrators, and the local community is contrasted with standard criteria in the research literature. Methods of collecting nominations are described, including a mail survey of teachers, interviews with administrators, and interviews with community members. Criteria that the three groups used to judge teacher effectiveness are given in narrative and tabular form, with rapport/concern/empathy cited most often by all three, followed by the quality of dedication, and with community involvement cited by 34% of administrators and 50% of community members. Concrete stories about particular teaching situations ("teacher tales") are suggested as an alternative to abstract generalizations about effective teaching practices. (MH)

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DOING RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL TEACHING: THE TEACHER TALE

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Judith Kleinfeld is Professor of Psychology, G. Williamson McDiarmid is a Research Associate at the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research, and Steve Grubis and William Parrett are both Assistant Professors in the School of Education at the University of Alaska. This paper was produced under grants from the Alaska Department of Education and the Alaska Council on Science and Technology. We would like to express special thanks to Bob Silverman, our contract officer at the Alaska Department of Education, for his professional contributions to this research. Our research associates--Bonnie Bless, Carol Barnhardt, and Sharon Young--did excellent fieldwork and made major intellectual contributions to the project. Ms. Young also contributed the preliminary analysis of some data used in this paper. The opinions expressed in this paper are solely the views of the authors and do not reflect the official views of the University of Alaska, the Alaska Department of Education, or other institutions.

This paper discusses dilemnas in doing research on the question: What kinds of teachers are effective with Eskimo and Indian children in isolated, rural communities? This research problem at first appeared straightforward, its practical value obvious. As we began to work out conceptual and methodological difficulties--such as how to measure teaching effectiveness cross-culturally--we began to doubt the validity of our basic research question.

Our intent in this paper is in part to offer the particular solutions we have developed to other researchers interested in cross-cultural teaching. But more than that, our intent is to offer the problems we have worried about (and are still worrying about) to other researchers. These problems at bottom concern not only how to do resarch on cross-cultural teaching but also how to do useful inquiry in education.

This paper discusses three issues. First, we examine the vexing issue of how to identify effective cross-cultural teachers. We point out the inadequacy of using gains on standardized achievement tests (the conventional research index of teaching effectiveness) as an index of teaching effectiveness in small, cross-cultural, multi-grade classrooms. We present an alternative strategy for identifying effective cross-cultural teachers. This is a "multiple hurdle" technique based on consistent nominations by three key groups--teaching colleagues, school administrators, and the local community.

Second, we discuss the criteria teachers, administrators, and community members use to identify effective cross-cultural teachers. We had expected community members to use criteria quite different from professional educators. We were largely wrong. These different groups evaluated teachers on the basis of quite similar criteria: 1) affective qualities (such as the ability to establish rapport with culturally different students), 2) craft skills (such as the ability to

organize a multi-grade classroom efficiently), and 3) political skills (the ability to gain the trust of Native communities).

Third, we discuss an epistemological issue usually ignored in studies of effective teachers: What kind of knowledge counts? Can we make any statements about effective village teachers that are general enough to be valid and specific enough to be useful?

We argue that the abstractions typically resulting from research on teaching effectiveness ("time on task," "high expectations," "cultural congruence") are so vague they actually offer little guidance to teachers. We propose an alternative to the search for abstract generalizations about good teaching: the "teacher tale." These are concrete stories about particular teaching situations--the time the teacher faced a boy with a gun, the time the teacher defied the principal on basketball rules and got transferred to a problem school. These stories usually deal with trouble--because trouble is interesting, trouble provokes reflection. When an effective teacher mulls over a difficult experience, these particular cases have enormous heuristic value for other teachers.

Rather than presenting teachers with "rules" for how good teachers behave, rules which invariably fail to encompass the relevant features of particular circumstances, this approach presents teachers with experience and the opportunity to learn from critical reflection on that experience. The teacher tale develops more than knowledge about cause and effect relationships, the goal of scientific research. The teacher tale also develops skill in analyzing complex, ambiguous situations--the typical situations in cross-cultural teaching--and more varied strategies for handling them.

The Research Project: Background

At the University of Alaska's Fairbanks campus, a primary mission of the teacher education program is to prepare teachers for small schools in rural, predominantly Native communities. This situation presents unusual challenges. Teachers must cope, often for the first time, with the experience of being a minority person, of being a symbol of a resented majority culture. Teachers must figure out how to survive materially in a remote village--their housing may be a one room cabin, they may have to cut wood for fuel and pack water from the village well, they may have to use a "honeybucket" for a toliet. Teachers must learn how to manage classrooms where they have to teach students spanning several grade levels and where they must teach subjects that they were never trained in.

Many rural teachers are extremely effective in these situations. Others leave as soon as they can. Rural school districts in Alaska have average teacher turnover rates of 25 percent a year; the rate of turnover in small isolated schools is much higher (Roth, 1980). The new teaching couple who fly into the village in a Cessna 207 and fly out without getting off the plane is part of rural Alaska folklore (Rider, 1982):

> I was waiting at the airstrip for my teaching couple to arrive. The plane sat down and I walked over to see if they were on board. There was a couple...but they didn't seem to be getting out. The pilot said they were the Jones', but they saw Fishcamp Village from the air and said, 'Return us to Gold Town.' I tried to talk them off the plane but they said you'd have to be crazy to teach here. You know, they were right--you have to be tough or crazy, and after two years I'm a little of both.

Native students can point out fine teachers for whom they have had great respect. But they are bitter about other teachers whom they feel come for the high salaries and do not work at teaching. In an exploratory study, one Native college student described a particularly ineffective teacher:

> She does not lecture. She gives us what kind of grade we want. So if we tell her that we got an A for the semester she will give us an A.

Files at the University's Rural Teacher Placement Office record similar cases:

> In a small village high school on the Bering Sea coast, the English teacher asks his students what grade they want. He records their replies in his grade book as their final grade, even though nine weeks of school remain. As far as he is concerned, Yupik kids can't learn anything--and since they will all stay in the village it doesn't matter what grade they receive. He then begins to set up the school's movie projector. The movie that arrived has no connection with the class, but the kids will stay quiet while the film is running.

As university faculty members in education, we all had heard such "horror stories." We had a vivid picture of the difficulties of village teaching. What we lacked was an equally vivid (and valid) picture of what <u>good</u> cross-cultural teaching looked like. Certainly we had our own pet theories. For example, most faculty believed that effective village teachers spent a great deal of time in the community and oriented their classrooms around the local culture. (As our fieldwork progressed, we began to believe both these ideas were simplistic. Many of the effective teachers we studied did not spend

substantial time visiting, hunting, and so on. Most focused on traditional academics.) We had never, however, tested the validity of our theories. Our approach was unfortunately circular. When we saw a teacher spending a good deal of time in the community and using the local culture as the basis of classroom work, for example, we considered the person a good teacher.

Our initial research question seemed simple, straightforward, and productive. What are the characteristics of teachers who are effective with Eskimo and Indian children in isolated rural communities? These communities included majority Native villages of a few hundred people and regional towns with a mixed Native and non-Native population. Hidden in this question, we soon found, were two complicated problems. First, how can we identify effective teachers in a cross-cultural context? Second, how can we describe them in ways that are useful in preparing new teachers for village schools?

Identifying Effective Cross-Cultural Teachers: Standard Criteria in the Research Literature

In her review of the literature on teaching effectiveness (which won an award from the American Educational Research Association) Zumwalt (1982) makes a fruitful distinction between two types of research on teaching that dominated the field in the late 1970s. One is "process-product" research: These studies examine the relationships between certain teacher behaviors and certain educational outcomes, usually standardized test scores. The other is "descriptive" research: These studies suggest new ways of thinking about teaching, new conceptual frameworks for examining what happens in classrooms.

The process-product research tradition singles out gains on standardized achievement tests as the central index of teaching effectiveness. To our

knowledge, no studies of the relationship of teacher behavior to achievement test scores have been done in Native American education. Descriptive studies of Native American classrooms have been done. While these studies generally do not identify a specific index of teacher effectiveness, they typically have an implicit view of what effective teaching in Native American communities looks like. Fundamentally, effective teachers are believed to adopt a culturally congruent teaching style--entering into the communicative styles of Native communities, emphasizing Native cultural materials in the classroom, and basing classroom life on Native American value patterns.

Both of these measures of teaching effectiveness--culturally congruent teaching styles and gains on standardized tests--were, in our view, inadequate indicators of effective cross-cultural teaching. The problem with using cultural congruence in itself as an index of effective teaching is that it is not an outcome measure. The basic question is nor whether the teachers' instructional style is culturally congruent. The basic question is whether a culturally congruent teaching style does or does not have an effect on learning or student well-being or some other desired outcome.

Gains on standardized test scores--the other major index in the research literature--is beset by so many technical problems in small cross-cultural classrooms that it is virtually unusable. To alert other researchers, we describe below our experience in attempting to use standardized tests as an index of effective teaching in this setting.

To examine the feasibility of using standardized tests scores in rural Alaska schools, we did an exploratory study in one rural district. We collected fall and spring test scores from all teachers and calculated grade equivalent gains (the metric teachers are most comfortable with). We found a clear

pattern. Rural Native students made fairly large gains in the early elementary grades and small gains in the upper grades. A graph of test score gains by grade level produced an almost perfect downward sloping line. Testing specialists in the field of Native education with whom we discussed these findings said that they had found a similar pattern: Achievement gains typically decreased as grade level increased (Gabriel, 1983; Herrin, 1982; Jacobs, 1982).

This pattern meant we could not compare achievement gains when one teacher, for example, taught first grade and another taught eighth grade. The first grade teacher had an unfair advantage. Nor could we solve this problem by comparing, for example, only first grade teachers with each other. Most rural teachers taught a mixture of grades in their classrooms.

Another serious problem in using test scores was the small size of village classes. The average class size in rural Alaska is ten students (Glenn, 1983). Different students are absent on fall or spring testing days. We found that we were trying to compare standardized test score gains for different teachers when we had paired fall and spring test scores for only five or six students. We tried to solve this problem by aggregating the same teacher's students over several years but it rarely worked. Teacher turnover was too high.

Finally, when we inspected fall and spring scores, many scores looked suspiciously unreliable. A student might change twenty percentiles in either direction, for example, between a fall and a spring administration. This did not typically happen but it happened frequently enough to distort calculations of an average class gain in a class small to begin with.

Why are the test scores so unreliable? Possibly some rural students do not take the tests seriously. (One teacher showed us a student's note: "Today is

the stupid fucken' testing again. I might just guess on it today.") Most rural teachers are skeptical of standardized tests and they may communicate these feelings to students. Furthermore, many rural Native students score at low percentile levels; what this means is that they are doing a lot of guessing on the test and doing a lot of guessing makes test scores unreliable.

Gabriel (1981) suggests an approach to using test scores which minimizes some of the difficulties we found in the village situation as well as other problems, such as the fact that different districts use different tests. His fundamental assumption is: Ordinarily students maintain their same percentile level in the fall and the spring of the year. If the teaching has been unusually effective, students will increase in percentile standing.

In Gabriel's method, one first calculates the test growth (in expanded scale scores) a student must show to maintain the same percentile standing from the fall to spring testing. Then one calculates the student's actual growth during the year, the change in his or her fall to spring test scores. Finally, one divides the actual growth by the expected growth to determine what percentage of expected growth occurred. The advantage of this method is that it makes it possible to compare gain scores when different standardized tests are used and when students are at different grade or percentile levels.

Gabriel's approach is helpful, and we decided to use it to see if effective rural teachers showed unusual class gains on standardized tests. But we were still reluctant to use test scores as a major index of teaching effectivess. Even with this method, serious technical problems--small class size and test unreliability—remained.

We were reluctant to rely on standardized test scores for political reasons as well as technical reasons. Most rural teachers--the group we hoped

to interest in our research results--do not believe in test results. Many rural teachers flatly reject standardized tests as "culturally inappropriate."

In our view, the cultural inappropriateness issue is a red herring when we are talking about achievement tests in school subjects. (The cultural appropriateness issue is not a red herring when we are talking about other types of tests, especially intelligence tests.) An achievement tests is nothing more and purports to be nothing more than a measure of school knowledge, of Western cultural knowledge and western cultural conventions for displaying knowledge.

Many rural teachers use "cultural inappropriateness" as a rationale for their skepticism of achievement test scores. But we suspect that the real issue is that test results often do not make sense to teachers: Students who have learned a great deal in the teacher's judgment may show no change or even a decline on the test. This occurs, we suspect, not because tests are culturally inappropriate but rather because they are unreliable and insensitive to certain kinds of change. A rural teacher may well have succeeded in teaching a fourth grade Eskimo student who could not write an English sentence at the beginning of the year to write a full paragraph at the end of the year. The student might still score at the fifth percentile at the beginning of the year and the fourth percentile at the end of the year. All the test says is that the child remains at the bottom end of the nationwide distribution of fourth graders. The test result is valid but it does not look valid to the teacher, who knows that the student has learned a good deal.

The Multiple Nominations Approach to Identifying Effective Cross-Cultural Teachers

Rather than relying on test scores or any other single indicator of teaching effectiveness, we adopted a "multiple hurdle approach" to identifying effective cross-cultural teachers. This method is based on the work of David McClelland and his colleagues at McBer, a consulting firm that specializes in identifying the competencies of top performers in occupational fields where objective measures of effectiveness are hard to come by (Klemp, 1982). The basic premise of the McBer approach is that "the best way to find out what it takes to do a job is to analyze the job's outstanding performers and then to study what they do that makes them so effective" (Klemp, 1982).

McBer asks people in an occupational area, such as State Department foreign service officers, to nominate confidentially those people whom they consider to be top performers. Colleague nominations, McBer has found, are far more valid than supervisor's nominations for evaluating effective performers.

Next McBer conducts a "Behavioral Event Interview" with the people consistently identified as top performers and compares them with average performers. This interview, about two hours long, is a variation of the classical critical-incident technique. The person describes in fine detail past situations on the job where things went either very well or very poorly. The interview asks for the person's thoughts and feelings about the situation as well as the person's behavior. From these interviews, McBer develops a competency model which identifies the characteristics of top performers, for example, how they handle critical situations, what attitudes they hold, how they interpret experience, and so on.

We found the colleague nominations approach and the behavioral event interview intriguing. Nominations are not, of course, new in effective teaching research. In a massive national study of bilingual education, Tikunoff and his colleagues (1981) used nominations to identify successful bilingual classrooms. The basic problem with nominations is that they tend to be unreliable. Different people hold different views of what good teaching looks like--some prefer an open, noisy classroom, for example, and others a structured, disciplined classroom. The McBer approach partially overcomes this problem by obtaining nominations from a variety of people with different viewpoints.

In nominating effective rural teachers, we first needed to obtain judgments from teaching colleagues. The most appropriate colleague for rural teachers was other teachers in the same school district. Teachers from different districts did not usually know each other. Teachers from the same school sometimes had strong personal antagonisms, and many village schools only had one or two teachers anyway.

But obtaining effective teacher nominations from collegues alone was not sufficient. We could not assume that Eskimo and Indian community members would consider effective the same kinds of teachers that teachers--mostly whites from outside the village--considered effective. Community viewpoints were critical.

Obtaining administrators' nominations was important as well. In several situations, we found teachers whom their colleagues and the community thought well of but the central office did not. In some instances the teacher had built a political support base in the community and set the school against central office policies. Whether or not these teachers were "effective," the central office tried to get rid of them.

In sum, we obtained our sample of effective teachers in three stages. First, we mailed a survey to all teachers who had taught in eight rural Alaska districts for two years or more. Explaining that we were attempting to improve teacher education programs, we asked teachers to nominate experienced teachers who were unusually effective and to tell us why they had chosen these teachers. Second, we interviewed the central office staff who selected and evaluated rural teachers (usually assistant superintendents or area principals) and asked them to nominate outstanding rural teachers.

Where we had large numbers of nominations for a particular teacher from both teaching colleagues and administrators, we then sought community opinion. We generally interviewed local school board members and community people who were employed at the school; we talked to parents and students less systematically. (This was an error in our research design. Students especially were quite knowledgable judges of teachers.) Interviewing community members was the third stage rather than the first stage not because we considered teacher judgement to be more valid than community judgement. Quite the contrary, the considerations were entirely practical. We could contact teachers and administrators easily and inexpensively through a mailed or telephone survey. Interviewing community people required expensive, on-site fieldwork.

In using this multiple hurdle technique, we emphasize that the method is useful in identifying a criterion group of top performers. But the teachers who are not selected are not necessarily average or poor performers. A teacher who is rarely nominated may be an excellent teacher who is not well-known in the district. <u>This method should not be used as an evaluation tool; it is a research tool</u>.

Criteria that Teachers, Administrators, and Communities Use in Judging Teacher Effectiveness

The criteria teachers, administrators, and community people used to identify effective teachers could be grouped into three categories: affective qualities, craft skills, and political skills. Affective qualities include rapport, empathy, concern, dedication, enthusiasm, and high expectations. Craft skills refer to the technical aspects of teaching--innovation, management and organization, discipline, subject knowledge, and generally producing "results." Finally, political skills refer to teachers' ability to gain the support of the community in which they teach.

Below we examine the specific criteria teachers, administrators, and community members used to select effective teachers. Our original hypothesis was that professional educators and Native communities used very different criteria in judging teachers. Our hypothesis was largely wrong.

Teachers

Some 228 teachers from rural Alaska districts nominated particular teachers as unusually effective in rural Native communities.

We had expected--based on the national literature on effective teachers--that professionals would accord primacy to craft skills in selecting effective teachers. Research has shown a strong relationship between achievement test scores and such craft/technical skills as time on task, active teaching, and strong classroom management (Brophy, 1979; Good, 1979; Evertson, Emmer, and Brophy, 1980). Yet, rural teachers in Native villages, when asked why some of their number were more effective than others, most often cited affective qualities rather than craft skills (see Table). Forty-three percent of

TABLE

CRITERIA USED BY TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN RURAL ALASKA COMMUNITIES TO JUDGE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

CRITERIA	Percentage Using Criterion* TEACHERS	ADMINISTRATORS	COMMUNITY MEMBERS
AFFECTIVE QUALITIES			
Rapport, Concern, Empathy	43%	62%	58%
Dedication and Long Hours	35	31	30
High Expectations	22	24	8
CRAFT SKILLS			
Innovativeness, Creativity	32	24	13
Classroom Management, Organization	26	41	8
Subject Knowledge	15	31	5
Discipline	13	24	18
Results (e.g., higher grades, good classwork brought home)	--	--	25
POLITICAL SKILLS			
Community Involvement	16	34	50
Relevance to Local Culture**	11	10	--
	N = 228	N = 29	N = 40

* Due to the greatly unequal numbers in each category, calculating a chi-square statistic would be misleading.

** This criterion would be considered a craft skill as well. We placed it under political skills because it was not usually discussed as a way, for example, of clarifying difficult concepts.

the teachers mentioned rapport with students as the key to effectiveness and 35 percent cited dedication.

Describing the quality of rapport, teachers made such comments as "....A strong feeling for the students' welfare, both academically and socially"...."She has always been able to activate learning through the warmth and buoyance of her personality"...."He demonstrates warmth in look and touch, is involved in students' personal lives, is honest, keeps secrets, is willing to share his weaknesses and laugh at himself."

Describing the quality of dedication, teachers commented: ...."She is first of all a teacher, off duty as well as on, spending much of her time to the benefit of her students and the community"...."Gives much more than his regular 8-hour day to his kids"...."Willingness to spend long hours above and beyond what is necessary to do the job."

After these two affective qualities, teachers cited craft skills--32 percent suggested innovativeness and 26 percent mentioned classroom management skills. Teachers wrote, for example, "Continually looking for new ideas to use in the classroom"..."Has bold ideas that kids go for"...."Willing to try new ideas and switch course in midstream if old things don't work." Teachers did refer to the classroom management and organization skills emphasized in the national research literature--"Teaches to specific objectives"...."Highly organized with excellent course outlines and lab write-ups which are well integrated with the text and media materials"--but these were not the major issues.

The only other criterion mentioned by more than 20 percent of the teachers was high expectations--another affective quality. Teachers wrote

"Demands a high level of effort from students and rewards them for the efforts made" or "Does not accept the attitude that a student can't make progress."

Administrators

Our sample of administrators consisted of 29 principals and central office administrative personnel from 14 rural school districts. (We interviewed them while doing fieldwork for another project.)

We had anticipated that administrators would also use as their primary criterion for effective teaching either craft skills or measures of learning, such as gains on standardized tests. Administrators confounded our expectations as teachers had done: Over 60 percent cited rapport with students as a criterion in selecting effective teachers. Just over 40 percent mentioned a craft skill—classroom management.

While a third of the administrators in our sample thought community involvement key to effectiveness, probably an equal number viewed too deep an involvement in local affairs as a pitfall to be avoided. Teachers can be caught up in community disputes and turn people against them and, indirectly, against the school.

While central office administrators no doubt have grounds for cautioning teachers about local factionalism, such advice is also self-serving: Teachers who build up local support and who then use such grass-roots strength to defy the central office are the bane of administrators. Indeed, we found administrators rarely nominate as effective those teachers who have reputations as mavericks or who have developed independent political bases.

Community Members

While conducting fieldwork for another project, we also asked local school board members, parents, and community leaders in 22 randomly selected villages for the names of teachers they felt were effective. We asked respondents why they had selected these teachers and to describe in general what a teacher did to make the community think he was a good teacher. Our final sample consisted of 40 community members; while we interviewed a larger number, many responses were not specific enough to be codable.

In Athabascan Indian communities, most respondents answered our questions frankly and at length. In Yupik Eskimo communities, on the other hand, some responents hesitated to single out teachers as either good or bad. Public judgments of others in the community--particularly in conversation with an outsider--were not always deemed appropriate. The same prohibition usually did not apply to the more general, less personal question--"What does a teacher do to make people in the community think he is good?"

Most community members--like educational professionals--felt good teachers demonstrated their effectiveness through their affective behavior. Nearly 60 percent of those we interviewed used rapport with students as a criterion in describing effective teachers while 30 percent cited dedication. Comments of community members on effective teachers included: ...."They seem to have a way to get along with all the students. Even when they are strict they have a warm feeling for students"...."She has a great way with kids"...."She puts herself into everything...she spends most of her time with kids."

Community people rarely referred to craft skills in judging teachers. In most of these communities, as only half or fewer of the adult population had attended high schools, many of our respondents had little experience with

teachers and schools. Many felt they had no basis for comparing teachers. Few appreciated subtle differences in teaching methods or materials. But a quarter did mention their concern for academic results when they evaluated teachers. Community members noted, for example, when children's grades went up or when children brought home a good piece of classwork.

The critical question for community members is not what methods the teacher is using but the nature of the teacher as a person. The critical question is "Can we trust this person to care for and teach our children?" Once villagers have decided the teacher is trustworthy, then they allow the teacher to make his or her own decisions about how best to accomplish the job. Teachers enjoy this trust until they violate it by behaving contrary to local values. Teachers who, for example, have used the classroom as a forum for evangelical religious views have been asked to leave Catholic villages. Teachers who have used corporal punishment without prior community approval have similarly been dismissed.

Teachers' becoming involved in the community—half of the respondents cited this criterion--is so important because this is the way people get to know what kind of person the teacher is. Participating in local activities (going to bingo, to church, to the Elder's Dinner) also symbolizes, if not sharing, at least respect for, local values. For the community, the critical issue is trust and trust depends on knowing the teacher as a person and knowing that the teacher respects local ways.

What Characteristics of Effective Cross-Cultural Teachers Should We Be Looking For?

Both professional educators and community members had suggested some dimensions of teaching we should pay attention to, such as student rapport and

community trust. It was useful to know that the craft skills the national research literature dwells on are not the crucial skills in the village setting. But the characteristics we were coming up with (even if we succeeded in measuring them accurately and even if we succeeded in finding statistical relationships to achievement) were too vague to be useful in teacher education programs. Exactly what, for example, is "good student rapport" and how can a teacher training program develop it?

We turned, therefore, to the literature on effective teaching to find models for research on teaching, models that produce useful knowledge. We found four types of research: 1) qualitative studies of excellent teachers, 2) process-product studies of teacher behavior linked to high achievement test scores, 3) ethnographic studies of cross-cultural teaching, and 4) sociolinguistic studies of rhythm, pace, pause time, and so on in cross-cultural classrooms. None of these provided the kind of concrete knowledge, grounded in day to-day-teaching realities, that we were looking for.

Studies of outstanding teachers (the Teacher-of-the-Year variety) portrayed "superteachers" that no one with ordinary amounts of time and energy could emulate. These were the teachers who organized their students to transform, for example, a dilapidated three-room schoolhouse into a sparkling school complex complete with an adobe Indian oven, irrigation system, pond for the study of water life, and park with 1,200 newly planted trees (Van Schaack and Glick, 1982). Studies of this kind reminded us of a colleague's caution when we began our research: We should be looking, he said, for B+, not A+, teachers.

The national research literature on effective teaching, despite the hoopla about the breakthrough in at last finding teacher behaviors that result in achievement test gains among low-income children, was at bottom disappointing.

This research produced long lists of desirable teacher behaviors--holding high expectations, devoting large amounts of classtime to academic work, developing clear rules and management routines, teaching to mastery in small steps, teaching to the class as a whole rather than teaching in an individualized fashion (e.g., Brophy, 1979; Good, 1979; Evertston, Emmer, and Brophy, 1980). These prescriptive lists excite policymakers but not teachers (Zumwalt, 1982). Many of the behaviors are vague. What exactly does "high expectations" mean, for example, when a teacher is working with an Eskimo child who reads a story over and over and knows all the words but can't figure out what the story means?

The research attempts to specify universal scientific rules but in many situations these rules do not apply. In rural Alaska, for example, it is not useful to tell teachers that they should teach actively to the class as a whole. Their classes consist of a handful of students who usually span several grade levels; individualizing instruction is a necessity.

Abstract prescriptive lists also avoid the difficult questions which are concrete and particular. It is all very well to say, for example, that teachers should establish "clear rules." But what rules are acceptable in, for example, an Eskimo village? Teachers wrestle with specific issues in complex situations. Yet, if researchers attempt to answer these kinds of specific pedagogical questions the result will not be generalizable knowledge; it will be a laundry-list, a grab-bag of ideas that "worked for me."

The 1980s lists of effective teaching practices offer some guideposts. But they actually offer little more help to teachers trying to improve their teaching than the pre-1970s generation of effective teaching studies which came up with such teacher qualities as "clarity of presentation," "business-like

behavior," and "enthusiasm." (See Rosenshine and Furst, 1971 for a review of this literature.) And how could anyone really believe the contrary--that good teachers have low expectations or vague rules or make unclear presentations.

Since the national teacher effectiveness literature was disappointing, we turned to the specific research on Native American education. This research is dominated by the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, the culture of Native American communities conflicts in fundamental ways--value patterns, participation structures, communicative styles--with the culture of the school. These cultural discontinuities are the fundamental cause of low academic achievement on the part of many native American children. The remedy is to develop culturally congruent approaches to schooling.

In a useful review of the literature, Cotton and Savard (1981) abstract and analyze the research bearing on this hypothesis. Curiously, these authors conclude that programs responsive to the cultural characteristics of Native American groups improve school achievement although each specific study they abstract actually provides little solid support for this conclusion.

We cannot take space here to review each of these studies, their methodological flaws, and the errors of inference that lead Cotton and Savard to see this work as solid support for the cultural congruence hypothesis. We illustrate the problem by citing their review of two of Kleinfeld's studies (Kleinfeld, 1973, 1974), which they interpret as strongly supporting the notion that culturally harmonious teaching strategies increase learning among Indian and Eskimo children. What Kleinfeld found was that Eskimo and Indian students talked more in class, got more right answers on teacher-prepared tests, and scored higher on IQ tests when the teacher used a warm, personal approach communicated by nonverbal cues. Kleinfeld initially framed this study in terms

of the cultural congruence hypothesis: Eskimo and Indian students would do better because the teacher was using a personalized rather than a formal communicative style, an interpersonal style congruent with the personalized social relationships of village communities. But the cultural congruence interpretation didn't hold; the same study (Kleinfeld, 1974) shows that white students also talked more in class and got more right answers on teacher-prepared tests when the teacher used the warm personal approach. There was indeed no significant difference in how white and Native children responded to a personalized versus formal communicative style.

Research supporting the cultural congruence hypothesis must show:

1) when teachers use a culturally congruent approach, learning (or any other positive outcome) increases, and

2) the approach believed to be culturally congruent has more of an effect for the cultural group in question than for other cultural groups for whom the practice is not culturally congruent. In other words, the practice is not simply "good teaching."

The case for the cultural congruence hypothesis, as the old Scottish verdict puts it, is "unproved." The four authors of this paper do not all agree on its importance. Convincing studies demonstrating its validity have not been done. Part of the problem in seriously testing this hypothesis is its very attractiveness. The cultural congruence hypothesis is so seductive, so seemingly self-evident, that researchers slip into the error of interpreting their results to accord with their theory.

Another area of research relevant to Native American education is the sociolinguistic literature (Scollon, 1981; Phillips, 1982; Gumperz, 1977; Mehan, 1979; Erickson, 1980). This literature focuses on interactional occurences, such

variables as pause time, rhythm, pace, synchrony, participant structures and other navigational strategies. While this research offers intriguing avenues to teaching effectiveness, those working in the tradition limit their generalizations and eschew prescriptive solutions. Rural teachers who have been exposed to the sociolinguistic literature generally find it useful in providing possible explanations for phenomena observed in their classrooms.

The sociolinguistic literature is interesting not because it suggests specific characteristics of effective teachers but because it is useful and it doesn't. It suggests that practical problems are always more complex than any generalization can encompass and that the most useful knowledge for practitioners is not prescriptions but rather possibilities.

The Teacher Tale as a Heuristic Device

The basic problem with the search for scientific generalizations about effective teaching--whether they take the form of prescriptions about time on task or prescriptions about cultural congruence--is that these generalizations must be highly abstract to be valid and if they are highly abstract they are not useful.

The search for generalizable laws about teaching, as Kleibard (1982) concludes, is a largely futile endeavor:

> We might as well face the likelihood that teaching may not consist of standard best ways to do particular things. Being a good teacher, like being a good statesman or a good mother, may involve infinite possible human excellences and appropriate behaviors, no one much more a guarantor of success than the others (Kleibard in Zumwalt, 1982).

The most useful studies on teacher effectiveness, Zumwalt (1982) argues, are those that sensitize teachers. These studies, whether they are from the descriptive or from the process-product research traditions, help teachers think more about what they are doing and trying to do. These studies suggest not recipes or formulas but new explanations and unconsidered problems.

If we assume that there are many different ways of teaching well, if we define our research goal as providing teachers with guideposts and not formulas, then should our inquiry into effective teaching take the form of science? Researchers are increasingly questioning the dominance of the scientific paradigm with its search for lawful general relationships in educational research. Elliot Eisner puts the issue well:

> Most of us who have been professionally socialized in schools of education or in psychology departments come to accept a quite limited set of assumptions about what must be done to conduct meaningful educational research and to acquire knowledge or understanding...Our aspirations have been to develop systematic, scientifically based ways to conduct instruction and to plan school programs. That tradition, a strong one, is at lest seventy-five years old. Yet as attractive as that tradition has been to educational researchers working in universities scientific assumptions and procedures do not exhaust the forms of knowledge and methods of inquiry that humans use to give shape to the world (Eisner, 1979, vii, viii).

If we give up the scientific model, what method of inquiry do we substitute for it and in what form do we present what we learn? Researchers are suggesting various paradigms--ethnography, qualitative evaluation, journalistic snapshots, portraits, educational connoisseurship. We have chosen to explore another possible model for doing inquiry in education--that of

literature--and another form of presentation, the story. Stories are one of the oldest forms through which humans try to understand and give shape to their experience. The story focuses, as teachers focus, on concrete and complicated particulars. The story can encompass ambiguity and inconsistency. And complexity and ambiguity and inconsistency, not simple generalizations, are the stuff of human life and especially of cross-cultural teaching. (A journal for rural Alaska teachers was once titled "The Journal of Applied Ambiguity.")

Stories, while particularly advantageous in research on cross-cultural teaching, may be useful in other types of educational inquiry as well. In our experience, it is the concrete cases describing particular teaching problems, not the generalizations about teacher characteristics, that teachers find interesting, that leads them to reflect critically. As we ourselves read through the research literature, we found that we could not even remember many of the generalizations about effective teachers. What we found stimulating, what we remembered, what we thought about and talked about to our colleagues, were the concrete cases.

McBer, for example, had developed a competency model of the effective foreign service officer (Goleman, 1980). What was interesting about this research was not the list of competencies but the particular incidents from which the competencies came. To take one incident--suppose a directive comes from Washington saying the foreign service officer must show a certain film but, in North Africa, the officer knows the film will offend the local people. What should you do? What the effective foreign service officers did, McBer found, was to screen the film when they knew no one could come and then tell Washington they had shown the film. The concrete story is stimulating and leads

to further thought in ways that its conclusion alone--the importance of "social sensitivity" does not.

When we interviewed teachers who had been nominated as extremely effective--and when we interviewed each other to develop our own interviewing skills--what we found memorable were the teaching tales, the detailed descriptions of particular teaching situations. (On one occasion a colleague to whom we told a tale forgot the source and told the story, somewhat altered, back to us.) We found we were using these stories in our own classes to make points about rural teaching. For example, we quoted the following tale about a teacher's efforts to display respect for community values and how her efforts went awry.

> In the fall a lot of the people are gathering blueberries. One of my objectives was to have the students see how they could maybe help out other people in the community. So we decided that if you had eighteen hands with a lot of energy that they would be able to pick quite a few blueberries and give those to some of the old people.
>
> I asked my Native aide Ruby if she knew a good place to pick blueberries. She didn't respond, or she said, 'Anyplace is good.' So when it came to the day to pick blueberries we went out and earlier that week I had been walking around and saw that there were a lot of blueberries by the graveyard. So (laughs nervously) that's where we went.
>
> I noticed that Ruby seemed somewhat uncomfortable but there are times when you have a lot of students out on an unstructured activity. At that time I attributed her uncomfortableness to so many students.
>
> We had taken along a camera and were taking pictures. About two weeks later I was looking at those slides after school when a couple of the girls from the basketball team came in to see what I was doing. And they said, 'Oh you guys were picking

> berries, huh?' I said, 'Yes.' They said, 'But you didn't pick them by the graveyard did you?' And I said, 'Why?' (laughs nervously). And they told me that if we picked berries by the graveyard that meant someone in the village would die that year.
>
> Ruby and I never really talked about it after then, but I guess more than anything it made me realize that as a teacher I had a lot of power in one sense and people in the village would maybe not tell you things that would eventually do a lot of...could possibly be dangerous to their culture.
>
> I think from then on I learned that if it was some kind of a situation where we would be doing something in the community, that it would be good to more or less put Ruby in charge of those kinds of things. She would be the leader of those activities, and I felt that that way she wouldn't have to tell me what was and what wasn't acceptable.

This story, like good literature in general, does not have a single, simple lesson. We can identify many complexities, many themes, many inferences and experiences common to rural teaching. There is the importance but at the same time the risk of trying to make teaching responsive to local cultural values. We have come across many other teachers who made serious errors when they tried to build instruction around cultural practices they did not understand very well.

There is the need to be sensitive to the indirect communication styles common in Eskimo communities and to the importance of non-verbal cues. Why did Ruby not tell the teacher about the danger of picking blueberries by the graveyard...or had she told the teacher in ways that the teacher did not hear? Was Ruby's reluctance to tell the teacher straightforwardly of her impending error based on the indirectness of traditional Eskimo communication styles about sensitive matters (our interpretation) or the teacher's authority role in the

village (the teacher's own interpretation)? Or did it have nothing to do with culture? One rural teacher hearing this story, for example, shocked us by saying he thought this teacher simply had poor rapport with her Native aide and it was the teacher's responsibility to develop good rapport.

There is the question of what the teacher should have done afterwards. Should she have talked out the situation with Ruby or made apologies in the community? Then there is the question of what measures the teachers can take to avoid such problems. This teacher (known in the region as unusually effective) went beyond trying to learn more about local beliefs herself; she felt the best approach to avoiding blunders was to put her Native aide in charge of community projects.

When we have told this story to rural teachers, they have responded with stories of their own. The teacher tale provides an opportunity for the collection of related experiences and invites critical, collaborative reflection on these experiences. Some teachers confirm the experience, describing instances when village people did not tell them they were about to make serious errors. Other teachers bring up contradictory experiences, describing instances where community people did educate them and how their education took place.

No single generalization emerges from this discussion. None can because no single generalization can cover all circumstances. Rather, rural teachers come away with insights: Basing instruction on the local culture needs to be done with care; do not expect Eskimo adults always to inform you when you are making serious mistakes--even when you work closely with them; pay close attention to non-verbal reactions in Eskimo communities; consider the possibility that talking everything out may not be appropriate even if that's the way you

like to do things; consider the possibility that you can never learn what needs to be known about a community and that you should delegate authority.

As a heuristic device, the teacher tale has a number of advantages. First, it is memorable. Rural teachers have told us that these kinds of stories remain in their minds when they go out to the villages and that with time they see fresh meanings in the same stories. Second, the story is accepted as valid. Teachers are not hostile to the story the way they so often are to "research" because the story only claims to be one person's experience; it does not make claims to universal truth. Third, the stories are stimulating. They encourge critical reflection on experience. They place the teacher in the role not of the skeptic questioning "findings" but of researcher trying to construct meaning from the kaleidoscope of particular experiences.

Using teacher tales also has advantages in the university setting. It creates collaborative, rather than authority relationships between the professor and the students. Professors can avoid the unwarranted role of "expert laying down the law" when their students--seasoned practitioners--may have far more extensive cross-cultural experience than they do.

The teacher tale has obvious limitations as well. It is, at bottom, an anecdote. Its validity cannot be checked. The insights one draws depends on one's prior theories and biases. Its generalizability to other situations cannot be tested. The danger of the concrete case is that it is overly convincing. The compelling instance may be the odd case, not the paradigm case.

These objections have force. But they have less force if one's objective is not to come up with generalizable principles about rural teaching but rather to sharpen teachers' perceptions and to develop their critical intelligence.

We have not come across the systematic use of teacher tales as a method of doing inquiry in education. Rider (1982) has collected rural administrator's tales but he approaches these tales as folklore. Sachs and his students have examined the telling of stories in ordinary conversation, but these studies focus on sociolinguistic issues, such as turn exchange (Ryave, 1978). We have not seen teachers' stories analyzed as a naturally occurring form of professional education that can be made, through critical reflection, more intense.

In searching for new methods of inquiry and of training, education may find it useful to draw upon the experience of other professions, such as business and law; these professions have found the study of particular cases of enormous value. Lawyers in the United States and in countries which have been part of the British Commonwealth, for example, learn law by means of the "case method." Instead of studying general legal doctrines they study particular cases and how these cases were decided. Law students read ancient statements of archaic facts, molded by principles which may no longer be the law.

The appeal of the case method in law arises from reasons similar to its appeal in education--the complexity of human conduct and the relative weakness of general statements to deal with the multiplicity of circumstances that may arise. Generations of law students, for example, have studied the case of Hadley v. Baxendale, decided by an English court in 1854. A flour mill needed to have a broken crank shaft fixed and hired a shipper to take it to be repaired. The shipper was told that the mill was stopped by the need for the crankshaft, and he agreed to deliver it the next day. But the shipper carelessly delayed the shipment. The mill lost several days' revenues and sued for lost profits.

Both sides had strong appeals to justice. The mill had clearly informed the shipper of its need for speed, had definitely obtained a promise of next day's delivery, and had undeniably lost profits. But the shipper argued that he could not stay in business if he were exposed to such serious damages in routine situations. Suppose a man enters a taxicab, tells the driver he will lose a million dollar deal if he misses his plane connection in 30 minutes, and agrees with the driver to pay him double the fare if the driver gets him to the airport on time. If the taxi driver carelessly makes a wrong turn, should the driver be liable for the lost deal?

Lawyers find thinking about such particular cases and variations of them more fertile than thinking about legal principles alone. The facts are memorable and stimulate thought about the meaning of the principle and the circumstances in which it applies.

The study of particular cases can be useful to eductors for the same reasons it is to lawyers. Human conduct is so complex that generalizations are either too general to be useful or too particularized to be useful or false in too many circumstances. Where the generalizations are merely commentaries--glosses on particular stories--they gain concreteness from the facts out of which they arise.

Conclusion

We plan to experiment with teacher tales, with the case method, in our research on effective teachers in rural Alaska. But we have not entirely given up the search for scientific generalizations, for the characteristics of effective teachers. There are certain general questions it is useful to ask. For example, we can ask to what extent effective rural teachers do use the teaching

strategies emphasized in the national teaching effectiveness literature. Is the state Department of Education justified in promoting this research as a method of improving rural Native education? We can ask to what extent effective rural teachers do emphasize local cultural materials and culturally congruent approaches in their classrooms. As a college of education, are we justified in placing stress on this approach? We can, in short, cast doubts on received ideas and approved attitudes if doubts are justified.

But we doubt that the answers to these general questions will be of much interest to rural teachers. If our goal is to develop teachers' critical intelligence, to increase sensitivity to different facets of ambiguous teaching situations, and to expand their repetoire of strategies for dealing with them, a collection of teacher tales--straddling the border between literature and science--may be of far more use. As Eisner (1979) observes, "To assume that the only source of understanding is the laboratory is to render oneself helpless. There is much—to provide a gross understatement—that is useful from seasoned experience and critical reflection on that experience."

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